

Section 5: Audio and Video Products

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Introduction

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) produces numerous video and audio products. Staff in the Office of Communications (OC) have experience producing these products and will assist AHRQ project officers, other AHRQ staff, and contractors.¹

Anyone considering developing a video or audio product to convey an Agency- or project-related promotional message, or as a teaching or training tool produced under contract, must consult with OC staff prior to project initiation. The consultation will include a discussion to determine if a video or audio product is the appropriate medium for the intended purpose.

Before beginning any work on a video or audio product, you should be able to answer basic questions about your proposed product, such as the product's purpose, audience, and funding. The AV checklists in Appendix 5-C can assist you with creating your product.

It is also important to identify how your video or audio product will be delivered to OC. For more specific guidance on delivery file types and containers, please review Appendix 5-B, AHRQ Technical Delivery Guidance. In addition, if your video will be distributed via YouTube, please reference Appendix 4-B, AHRQ YouTube Video Submission Checklist.

Production and Contracting Considerations

Before beginning video or audio production, you will need to consider format and contracting issues. These include product length, features (such as interactivity or animation), availability and cost of background (b-roll) video or music, and hiring actors. OC staff can recommend video production vendors that have created successful products for AHRQ.

Video and audio products require AHRQ review and, depending on the purpose and topic, possibly also review by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). You should determine at the outset who the reviewers will be and how they will review the product (for example, as a group or individually). Working with you or a designee, OC will determine if your product requires HHS approval; if it does, OC will work with you to collect the required information and will then submit it to HHS. Time for reviews and approvals should be reflected in the project's timeline.

The following are other items to consider or accomplish when creating a video or audio product on behalf of AHRQ:

¹Most of the information in Section 5 is required for contractors and is not intended for grantees. Grantees may use the information, checklists, or releases if they wish, but they are not required to send completed or signed versions to AHRQ. If, however, you are a grantee who is producing materials that are intended to complement an existing AHRQ program, that may reside on an AHRQ-sponsored Web site, or that may be featured in AHRQ promotional outreach, you also must follow these guidelines."

- **Understand Your Project Goals:** The first step in any process is to determine the goals or desired outcomes. Goals (for example, training, consumer education, meeting presentation) should be clearly identified before beginning any video or audio project and should be coordinated with key OC personnel.
- **Understand Your Target Audience(s):** Once you understand your goals, you can determine exactly who you need to reach with your video or audio communications activity. It is possible that you may determine that a video or audio product is not the best way to reach your audience. You must clearly identify your audience before you try to craft a message that will resonate with them and prompt them to take the appropriate and desired action. OC staff will help ensure that your product is targeting the proper audience.
- **Identify the Type of Audio or Video:** For disseminating AHRQ's messaging through audio and video, there are four primary types of video or audio products that should be developed: narrative, instructional, informational, and PSA. Working with OC on the type of video or audio product from the beginning of your project will ensure that your videos are constructed to meet the needs of AHRQ's target audiences. See Appendix 5-E, Identifying Type of Audio or Video Product Needed, for more information.
- **Develop a Realistic Production Schedule:** Prior to production of a video or audio product, create a production schedule that highlights the key benchmarks in preproduction (planning), production, and post-production (editing and distribution). In addition, identify key decision points where you will need AHRQ's input so that the production stays on schedule. Always remember to build in time for feedback and consultation with OC throughout the production process.
- **Develop an AV Production Script:** An AV production script is a two-column script. For a **video product**, the right column should contain a list of audio sources for the script, including but not limited to dialogue, voiceover narration, on-camera narration, music, and so forth. The left column of the script is reserved for descriptions of the accompanying visual elements of the video, including but not limited to B-roll, graphics, stage direction, text, and so forth. For an **audio product**, the right column should contain only the dialogue or narration; the left column lists the speaker and any required sound effects. For video, remember that all audio must be covered with video or your audience will be watching a black screen. For audio, remember that your listening audience cannot see facial or hand gestures. Above the actual script, you should list all of your speakers and their roles (if they are actors), at least one sentence on what the script is about, and the length you think your final, edited production will be. Please consult with OC staff regularly throughout the scripting phase.

- **Determine the Proper Length of Your Product:** The proper length of your video or audio product will be established in the scripting phase of the project. Appropriate video and audio product lengths are subjective in nature and require expert input that accounts for type, audience, and distribution platforms. Please coordinate with OC staff from the onset of the scripting phase to determine the proper length for your video or audio products.
- **Distribute and Collect Talent Releases:** Every person who is recognizable in the video or can be heard distinctly on an audio product must sign a talent release form that permits the product to be distributed. The type of release used is determined by the person's role in your product. OC staff can assist you with releases. See Appendix 5-D, AV Releases, for samples.
- **Create an Evaluation Plan:** Evaluation is a critical means of measuring the success of any video or audio project produced on behalf of AHRQ. Prior to embarking on the production of your product, identify how you will determine success based on the purpose of your product (for example, you could count the number of podcast streams or downloads, or the number of CME certificates issued).
- **Provide a Call to Action:** For any video or audio product, you should always include some type of "Call to Action" so viewers or listeners will know what to do with the information you have given them. For example, this might be as simple as providing a URL or phone number to allow users to receive a consumer brochure, find out about other AHRQ information on the topic, or view a list of other training opportunities.
- **Maintain Consistent Branding:** When creating video and audio products on behalf of AHRQ, always maintain a color palette, sound design, logo design, and graphic treatment consistent with existing AHRQ materials. If you are creating a series of video or audio products, make sure to create and use an open and close that looks and sounds the same for all video and audio products in that series. Ensure that the video or audio product you create is aligned with the AHRQ Web site on which it is being hosted or distributed. Work with OC staff to ensure that your video or audio product contains all the proper branding elements. Consult Section 7, Branding Design Element Specifications. Please note:
 - Products prepared under contract to AHRQ must include the HHS/AHRQ branding and may not contain contractor logos
 - The HHS/AHRQ branding is used only for official AHRQ-sponsored products
- **Identify the Funding Source:** Somewhere in your video or audio, you must state that the product was "Produced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services."

- **Determine Proper Delivery Format:** Prior to developing your video or audio product, please refer to Appendix 5-B, AHRQ Technical Delivery Guidance, for all the requirements for approved delivery of your final product to OC. In addition, if your video will be distributed through YouTube, please refer to Appendix 4-B, AHRQ YouTube Video Submission Checklist. Working with OC staff from the beginning of your project will ensure that you are developing products that can be used in the way you intend.
- **Comply With Section 508:** Any material that is funded by the U.S. Government must comply with the requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.² Specific language about compliance should be written into contracts or task orders that include any audio or video product. Examples of proper formats for transcripts can be found in Appendix 5-A, AHRQ Standards for Contractors Developing Multimedia Products. All video products must be captioned. For captioning requirements specifically related to video to be delivered for YouTube distribution, please reference to Appendix 4-B, AHRQ YouTube Video Submission Questionnaire.

Production Details

OC will work with Task Order Officers (TOOs) to obtain appropriate HHS clearances prior to the start of production. Contractors should include the TOO or other AHRQ staff in discussions about all elements of the video, including graphics, fonts, music, animation, types of actors, wardrobe/makeup, and locations. Contractors may not proceed without discussion and agreement from the TOO about these elements.

Contractors should provide photos or video of potential locations and receive approval from AHRQ before booking any space.

Contractors should welcome the TOO or other AHRQ staff to attend rehearsal and the video shoot. To facilitate this, contractors should provide the full shooting schedule to the TOO at least 15 business days in advance.

Logos

The HHS/AHRQ logo (or other identification) must be included as specified in the AHRQ Publishing and Communications Guidelines. The contractor's logo may not be placed in graphics, titles, or any of the products produced through the contract, nor may the contractor or any subcontractor be thanked in these products.

If there is a reason to add special graphics or a list of actors' names and characters, or to thank organizations who donated space or expertise to a video, the contractor should propose such language for TOO approval.

²Section 508 is part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1998. See [Section 508 Law and Standards](#), [Making Files Accessible](#), and [Myths and Facts About 508](#) for more information.

Actors for Video Production

If the script includes live talent (rather than animation), the contractor shall include AHRQ staff in decisions about that talent, including the diversity of actors chosen. The contractor should also make every attempt to include AHRQ staff in the audition process itself (e.g., in person; via Skype; through recordings).

Providing head shots of potential actors to AHRQ is not an adequate substitute for auditions. AHRQ must be able to judge the actors fairly on their acting ability and not just their looks. However, if live auditions are problematic, the contractor may obtain and provide to AHRQ videos of the potential actors in prior auditions or prior work.

Final decisions about talent will be made by AHRQ. All talent releases/contracts will assign rights to AHRQ and not to the contractor (or a subcontractor), and will be negotiated for worldwide rights in perpetuity.

Note: A discussion of diversity and surroundings is also needed with respect to any proposed animated video that will contain human-looking characters.

Video Rough Cut Reviews

The contractor shall develop rough cut footage for AHRQ to review, allowing enough time and resources for any changes that may be needed. Rough cuts may be in a lower resolution, and may be missing some graphics or other minor elements. However, rough cuts should be as close to complete as possible for that phase of the project, and the contractor should provide the TOO with some indication of what is missing and where it goes.

If AHRQ finds the rough cuts acceptable, they must then be submitted to HHS for final clearance. The TOO will notify the contractor when clearance has been approved (or if HHS requires any changes).

Additional Information

To discuss specific projects or to obtain additional guidance on audio or video products, please send an email to MultimediaSupport@ahrq.hhs.gov.